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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
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[REDACTED] SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 4852

E. O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PINS, ASEC, SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT AFTER FOUR MONTHS IN POWER

REFS: (A) STATE 171456, (B) BUENOS AIRES 2747, (C) BUENOS AIRES 4716,
(D) BUENOS AIRES 4844, (E) BUENOS AIRES 4718

1. SUMMARY: AS SUGGESTED IN THIS YEAR'S CASP OVERVIEW (SEE REF B), IF IT WAS TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE NEAR TERM, THE NEW MILITARY GOVERNMENT (A) HAD QUICKLY TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE NATION'S ECONOMIC MALAISE, AND (B) CONTROL TERRORISM. FURTHER, IT WAS NOTED, IF THE GOVT WAS TO HAVE A FAIR CHANCE OF ACCOMPLISHING THESE TWO PRIMARY OBJECTIVES, IT WOULD HAVE TO MAINTAIN A HIGH DEGREE OF INSTITUTIONAL COHESION. CLEARLY, THE ARMED FORCES CANNOT EFFECTIVELY TACKLE THE OTHER TWO PROBLEMS IF THEY ARE SERIOUSLY AT ODDS AMONG THEMSELVES. AFTER FOUR MONTHS IN POWER, THE RESULTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS ARE MIXED. THE ECONOMIC PROGRAM SO FAR HAS HAD REMARKABLE SUCCESS IN BRINGING INFLATION UNDER CONTROL AND RESTORING CONFIDENCE IN THE EXTERNAL SECTORS, BUT AT THE COST OF REDUCED DEMAND AND REAL WAGES WHICH COULD PRODUCE SERIOUS LABOR TROUBLE WITHIN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. LIKEWISE, THE

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GOVERNMENT HAS SCORED IMPORTANT SUCCESSES AGAINST THE TERRORISTS (THE DEATH OF ERP LEADER SANTUCHO BEING THE MOST SPECTACULAR). THE KIND OF COUNTERVIOLENCE TO WHICH IT HAS RESORTED, HOWEVER, COULD EVENTUALLY CREATE MORE PROBLEMS THAN IT SOLVES. ALREADY, MANY WHO FORMERLY SUPPORTED THE GOVT HAVE BEEN ALIENATED BY ITS TOLERANCE OF EXCESSES ON THE PART OF THE SECURITY FORCES--OFTEN INVOLVING INNOCENT PEOPLE. MOREOVER, DESPITE EFFORTS TO PAPER OVER AND MAKE LIGHT OF DIFFERENCES, THEY DO EXIST. MASSERA, FOR EXAMPLE, IS JOCKEYING TO MAKE HIMSELF PRESIDENT AT VIDELA'S EXPENSE (WITH LITTLE CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING), AND BASIC DECISIONS SUCH AS A LABOR POLICY ARE BEING DELAYED BECAUSE OF CONFLICTS OF OPINION AMONG THE MILITARY. IN ADDITION, THE UNWIELDINESS OF THE JUNTA SYSTEM, RESULTING IN INDECISIVENESS AND BUREAUCRATIC CONFUSION, PLUS THE GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO GIVE ATTENTION TO CONSENSUS, BODE ILL FOR ITS LONG-TERM PROSPECTS. IT CAN MAKE ADJUSTMENTS WHICH WOULD IMPROVE ITS OUTLOOK. IN THIS CONTEXT, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE US CONTINUE TO MAKE EFFORTS TO DISSUADE IT FROM REPRESSIVE POLICIES WHICH WILL NOT ONLY CAUSE PROBLEMS IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS BUT ARE CONTRARY TO THE GOA'S OWN INTERESTS. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THERE IS LITTLE ELSE WE CAN DO, FOR THERE IS NO ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT NOW ON THE HORIZON. END SUMMARY.

2. ECONOMY. OF THE GOVERNMENT'S TWO PRIMARY OBJECTIVES, GETTING THE ECONOMY GOING AGAIN WAS (AND IS) THE MOST PRESSING. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TERRORISM MAY BE PROTRACTED AND CERTAIN OF THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS MAY TAKE YEARS (IF EVER) TO SOLVE, BUT UNLESS MINISTER OF ECONOMY MARTINEZ DE HOZ CAN PRODUCE TANGIBLE RESULTS QUICKLY, THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT NOT LAST LONG ENOUGH TO HAVE A FAIR SHOT AT THEM (AND, OF COURSE, EVEN HIS SUCCESS WOULD NOT GUARANTEE THAT). MARTINEZ DE HOZ, IN OTHER WORDS, MUST BUY TIME FOR THE GOVERNMENT. HE HAS HAD SOME SUCCESS IN HIS EFFORTS TO DO SO, WITH MOST SUCCESS IN CURBING INFLATION AND RESTORING CONFIDENCE IN EXTERNAL SECTOR. AN OVERBLOWN PUBLIC PAYROLL AND INEFFICIENCIES IN THE GOVT SECTOR ARE BEING CORRECTED. STEPS TO CONTROL INFLATION, HOWEVER, HAVE PRODUCED A DROP IN DEMAND AND RECESSION. THIS WAS TO BE EXPECTED. SOME BELT TIGHTENING WAS INEVITABLE. WHETHER THE GOVT HAS MOVED TOO FAST REMAINS TO BE SEEN. LABOR HAS YET TO BE HEARD FROM AND UNLESS MORE ATTENTION IS GIVEN TO

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REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT AND TO IMPROVING REAL WAGES, THE GOVERNMENT COULD FACE SERIOUS SOCIAL STRIFE WITHIN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. HOPEFULLY, THAT ATTENTION WILL BE GIVEN. LABOR IS NOT MARTINEZ DE HOZ'S ONLY PROBLEM, HOWEVER. HE HAS HIS CRITICS, TOO, WITHIN THE MILITARY, SOME OF WHOM, FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, WOULD LIKE TO SEE HIM AND HIS PROGRAM DUMPED. FINALLY, HIS PROGRAM CANNOT BE TOTALLY SUCCESSFUL WITHOUT INPUTS OF DIRECT FOREIGN INVESTMENT, AND THAT, IN TURN, IS NOT LIKELY TO MATERIALIZE UNTIL THERE IS A MARKED IMPROVEMENT IN THE SECURITY SITUATION. (THUS, THE TWO PRIMARY OBJECTIVES ARE CLOSELY INTERRELATED.)

3. SECURITY SITUATION. UNQUESTIONABLY, THE GOVT IS MAKING HEADWAY AGAINST THE TERRORISTS. THE ERP ESPECIALLY HAS SUFFERED SERIOUS SETBACKS, INCLUDING THE LOSS OF SOME OF ITS TOP LEADERS, ITS MAIN PRINTING PLANTS AND A GOOD PERCENTAGE OF ITS BEST COMBAT EFFECTIVES. THE MONTONEROS HAVE BEEN LESS HARD HIT, BUT EVEN THEY NO LONGER ENJOY THE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND ACTION THEY ONCE DID. THE ERP AND MONTONEROS ARE RECENTLY REPORTED TO HAVE AGREED UPON A MERGER. AT THE VERY LEAST, THEY CAN BE EXPECTED TO COORDINATE THEIR EFFORTS MORE CLOSELY. DESPITE THE BLOWS THEY HAVE SUFFERED, THEY REMAIN A FORMIDABLE FORCE. EVEN THE MOST OPTIMISTIC ESTIMATES SUGGEST THE GOVERNMENT HAS ANOTHER SIX TO EIGHT MONTHS OF HARD FIGHTING AHEAD OF IT BEFORE THE TERRORISTS MIGHT BE BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL (SEE, FOR EXAMPLE, INTERIOR MINISTER'S CONVERSATION WITH AMB HILL ON JULY 15--REF C). MORE CAUTIOUS OBSERVERS ARE STILL UNCERTAIN EVEN OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EVENTUAL VICTORY.

4. COUNTERVIOLENCE. WHILE THE GOVT HAS SCORED SOME DEFINITE SUCCESSES AGAINST THE TERRORISTS, IT IS, IN THE PROCESS, CREATING NEW PROBLEMS FOR ITSELF. RIGHT-WING DEATH SQUADS, LOOSELY DUBBED THE TRIPLE A, WERE ACTIVE BEFORE THE MARCH 24 COUP, BUT MOST ARGENTINES HAD HOPED THEIR ACTIVITIES WOULD END WHEN THE MILITARY TOOK OVER. SUCH HAS NOT BEEN THE CASE. IF ANYTHING, THE ACTIONS OF PARAMILITARY, OR PARAPOLICE, GROUPS HAVE INCREASED SINCE MARCH 24. THE SAME UNMARKED FORD FALCONS ARE BEING USED AND REPORTEDLY MANY OF THE SAME "OFF-DUTY" FEDERAL POLICEMEN WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE TRIPLE A REMAIN ACTIVE IN TODAY'S VIGILANTE-TYPE OPERATIONS. ESTIMATES OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ILLEGALLY DETAINED RUN

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INTO THE THOUSANDS AND MANY HAVE BEEN TORTURED AND MURDERED. MANY OF THESE VICTIMS HAVE BEEN INNOCENT OF ANY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE ERP OR MONTONEROS. THE TARGETS HAVE INCLUDED CATHOLIC PRIESTS AND THE THOUSANDS OF CHILEAN AND URUGUAYAN REFUGEES NOW IN ARGENTINA. (AND AGAINST THE LATTER GROUP THE ARGENTINES COUNT WITH THE COOPERATION OF CHILEAN AND URUGUAYAN SECURITY OFFICERS OPERATING IN ARGENTINA; SEE REF D). THE OBJECTIVES ARE TO GATHER INTELLIGENCE AND TO INTIMIDATE ANYONE WHO MIGHT EVEN REMOTELY SYMPATHIZE WITH THE TERRORISTS, THUS CUTTING INTO THEIR SUPPORT STRUCTURE. THIS INVOLVES A COST TO THE GOVT, HOWEVER. VIOLENCE AGAINST INNOCENT PEOPLE, FOR EXAMPLE, IS PROBABLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. THE MURDER OF FIVE PRIESTS ON JULY 4 BY OVERZEALOUS POLICEMEN CERTAINLY DAMAGED THE GOVT'S CAUSE FAR MORE THAN IT HELPED IT. INDEED, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW IT WAS HELPTED AT ALL, IN THIS OR IN HUNDRED OF OTHER CASES WHICH THE GOVT SIMPLY WRITES OFF AS "MISTAKES." SUCH "MISTAKES", IF LONG CONTINUED, COULD IN TIME PRODUCE A POPULAR REACTION AGAINST THE GOVT.

5. THERE ARE THOSE IN THE GOVT WHO DEPLORE HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, BUT THEY ARE MOST UNLIKELY TO MAKE AN ISSUE OF THEM. PRESIDENT VIDELA AND THE MODERATES AROUND HIM SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPLICATIONS AND IF THEY HAD THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS WOULD PREFER TO CONTROL POLICE (AND MILITARY) EXCESSES. INDEED, GENERAL CORGETTA, DURING HIS SHORT-LIVED TENURE AS CHIEF OF FEDERAL POLICE, DID, WITH GENERAL VIDELA'S BLESSINGS, TRY TO BRING THE POLICE UNDER CONTROL. HE FAILED. THE INCIDENT PROBABLY ILLUSTRATES BETTER THAN ANY THE DILEMMA IN WHICH VIDELA SEES HIMSELF. HE DOES NOT WISH TO SEE HIS GOVERNMENT'S IMAGE DAMAGED BY HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES. BUT, AT THE SAME TIME, HIS PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS THE SAME AS THAT OF THE HARDLINERS: TO DEFEAT THE LEFT-WING TERRORISTS. THAT WILL TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER EVERYTHING, INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTS. VIDELA WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT RPT NOT MAKE AN ISSUE OF THE LATTER IF HE BELIEVES THAT WOULD RISK BRINGING ABOUT RUPTURES WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES, POLICE REBELLIONS, ETC. HE WILL TOLERATE EXCESSES ON THE PART OF THE SECURITY FORCES BECAUSE HE HAS TO DEPEND UPON THEM.

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6. ROLE OF COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. THE HUMAN RIGHTS/SECURITY EQUATION IS COMPLICATED TOO BY THE FACT THAT MANY OFFICERS, PROBABLY INCLUDING VIDELA, ARE CONVINCED THE ANTI-TERRORIST FIGHT HERE REPRESENTS A MAJOR BATTLE IN "WORLD WAR III" AND THAT ARGENTINA HAS BEEN CHOSEN BY "INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM" AS A TESTING GROUND IN ITS CAMPAIGN TO CONQUER THE WORLD. THIS IS AN EMOTIONAL REACTION WITH LITTLE IF ANY EVIDENCE TO SUBSTANTIATE IT. TO BE SURE, THE ERP IS TROTSKYITE AND THE MONTONEROS ARE NOW VAGUELY MARXIST (THOUGH THEY STARTED OFF AS EXTREME RIGHT-WING CATHOLIC NATIONALISTS). BOTH HAVE RECEIVED A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF TRAINING AND ENCOURAGEMENT FROM CUBA, BUT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST CUBA IS INVOLVED AT THIS POINT IN A CONCERTED EFFORT TO OVERTHROW THE GOA. NOR IS THERE ANY EVIDENCE AT ALL TO SUGGEST THAT EITHER MOSCOW OR PEKING ARE SO INVOLVED. THE TERRORISTS HERE ARE ESSENTIALLY HOMEGROWN. THEY HAVE SOME (RATHER TENUOUS) TIES TO THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, AND/OR TO BE MIR AND TUPAMAROS, BUT THEY ARE BY NO MEANS DEPENDENT UPON THOSE TIES. THIS IS A LOCAL, NOT AN INTERCONTINENTAL, EFFORT TO OVERTHROW THE GOVT AND SYSTEM IN ARGENTINA. MOSCOW, PEKING OR HAVANA MIGHT VIEW AN ARGENTINA IN EXTREMIST-LEFTIST HANDS AS

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A BLOW TO US AND THUS AS A NET GAIN TO THEM. BUT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT ANY OF THEM VIEW THIS AS SUFFICIENTLY INTRIGUING TO WARRANT ANY REAL RISK OR EXPENDITURE OF CAPITAL. THE PERCEPTION OF THE EXTERNAL THREAT, THEN, MAY NOT BE VALID, BUT MANY ARGENTINE MILITARY OFFICERS, AND SOME CIVILIANS, ARE CONVINCED THAT IT IS AND WILL SO CONDUCT THEMSELVES. THE PERCEPTION, MOREOVER, SEEMS TO BE SHARED BY THE OTHER MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE SOUTHERN CONE.

7. INSTITUTIONAL COHESION. A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF POLITICKING AND JOCKEYING FOR POSITION IS NORMAL IN THE ARMED FORCES AND WAS TO BE EXPECTED. FURTHER, ONE MUST BE CAUTIONS OF SIMPLISTIC VIEWS WHICH SUGGEST A SHARP AND UNWAVERING LINE DRAWN BETWEEN TWO CLEARLY DISCERNIBLE BODIES, THE HARDLINERS AND THE MODERATES. IN FACT, AS MANY SOPHISTICATED ARGENTINE OBSERVERS HAVE NOTED, ONE MUST REDRAW THE LINES ALMOST ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS. SOME WHO ARE HARDLINE ON ONE ISSUE ARE MODERATE ON OTHERS, AND, INDEED, MANY CHANGE THEIR POSITIONS AS IT SUITS THEIR PERSONAL CONVENIENCE AND FORTUNES. IT IS, FOR EXAMPLE, ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO DEFINE EXACTLY WHERE ADMIRAL MASSERA LINES UP (EXCEPT THAT HE IS CLEARLY ALL FOR ADMIRAL MASSERA). IN SHORT, THE APPELLATIONS "HARDLINERS" AND "MODERATES" ARE SHORTHAND EXPRESSIONS WHICH SHOULD NOT BE OVERDRAWN.

8. HAVING PUT FORWARD THOSE WORDS OF CAUTION, HOWEVER, IT NEVERTHELESS REMAINS OBVIOUS THAT THE HIGHER THE DEGREE OF COHESION, THE BETTER THE GOVERNMENT'S CHANCES OF SUCCESS; THE DEEPER THE DIVISIONS, THE GREATER ITS PROBLEMS. SO FAR, DISAGREEMENTS HAVE NOT REACHED CRITICAL PROPORTIONS, BUT THEY ARE CLEARLY THERE AND MAY BE GROWING. HARDLINERS, FOR EXAMPLE, TEND TO DISAGREE STRONGLY WITH VIDELA'S APPOINTMENT OF POLITICAL FIGURES TO AMBASSADORIAL POSTS AND ARE DETERMINED THAT THE GOVT SHALL NOT, AS VIDELA WISHES, NEGOTIATE WITH POLITICIANS AND LABOR LEADERS. DECISION ON A COMPREHENSIVE LABOR POLICY HAS BEEN BLOCKED BECAUSE THE ARMED FORCES HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO COME TO ANY AGREEMENT AMONG THEMSELVES AS TO WHAT KIND OF TRADE UNION STRUCTURE THEY WANT. AND, AS INDICATED EARLIER, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE OPPOSITION WITHIN SOME ELEMENTS OF THE MILITARY EVEN TO MARTINEZ DE HOZ'S RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL ECONOMIC PROGRAM.

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9. "NORMAL DIFFERENCES OF OPINION, MOREOVER, ARE COMPLICATED AND STRESSED BY THREE ADDITIONAL FACTORS: (A) THE UNWIELDY JUNTA SYSTEM. THE JUNTA, NOT THE PRESIDENT, IS THE SUPREME AUTHORITY IN THE LAND. THE CABINET AND ZONES OF RESPONSIBILITY IN THE COUNTRY ARE ALSO SPLIT UP AMONG THE THREE SERVICES. THIS INEVITABLY TRANSFER RIVALRIES TO THE GOVT AND ENCOURAGES A SITUATION IN WHICH CABINET MINISTERS AND INTERVENTORS HAVE A TENDENCY TO REPORT AND RESPOND MORE TO THE CHIEF OF THEIR SERVICE ARM THAN TO THE PRESIDENT. (B) VIDELA'S FAILURE TO ASSERT HIMSELF. THE ONLY WAY TO COMPENSATE FOR THE CONFUSION AND INDECISIVENESS RESULTING FROM THE GOVT'S UNWIELDY STRUCTURE WOULD BE FOR VIDELA TO ASSERT HIMSELF; IN EFFECT, TO MAKE HIMSELF PRESIDENT IN FACT AS WELL AS IN NAME, BUT VIDELA IS NOT THE TYPE TO SO ASSERT HIMSELF. A DECENT, HONEST AND SINCERE PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER, HE OBVIOUSLY ABHORS POLITICAL CONFRONTATIONS AND INFIGHTING. THOSE CLOSE TO HIM CONTINUE TO INSIST THAT HE WILL ASSERT HIMSELF WHEN THE PROPER TIME COMES. WE HOPE THEY ARE RIGHT, BUT HE CANNOT PROCRASTINATE MUCH LONGER. (C) ADMIRAL MASSERA'S AMBITIONS. IN TERMS OF HIS DRIVE AND GIFT FOR POLITICAL MANEUVER, MASSERA IS PROBABLY MORE SUITED TO BE PRESIDENT THAN VIDELA. CERTAINLY MASSERA THINKS SO AND THERE CAN NO LONGER BE MUCH DOUBT THAT HE IS AFTER THE PRESIDENCY. PERONIST, UCR AND LABOR SOURCES HAVE ALL TOLD EMBOFFS THAT IN HIS CONTACTS WITH THEM OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS, MASSERA HAS BEHAVED LIKE A MAN TRYING TO BUILD HIS OWN POWER BASE (THE IDEA, APPARENTLY, BEING THAT HE WOULD COMPENSATE FOR HIS SMALL MILITARY BASE BY CARVING OUT SUPPORT WITHIN THE MORE SIGNIFICANT CIVILIAN SECTORS). MASSERA ALLEGEDLY COMMENTED TO A KEY PERONIST LEADER SOME WEEKS AGO THAT HE "WOULD HAVE TO BE PATIENT WITH VIDELA'S BUMBLING FOR ONLY A SHORT WHILE YET", AND THAT HE, MASSERA, HOPED SOON TO HAVE HIS OWN MEN IN PLACE (?). VIDELA IS AWARE OF MASSERA'S MANEUVERING, DISTRUSTS HIM AND WOULD PROBABLY LIKE TO GET RID OF MASSERA BEFORE THE LATTER TRIES TO GET RID OF HIM-- BUT, AGAIN, VIDELA AVOIDS CONFRONTATIONS. MASSERA AND VIOLA, THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, REPORTEDLY ALSO REGARD ONE ANOTHER AS ADVERSARIES. IRONICALLY, MASSERA CRITICIZES VIOLA FOR HIS "POPULIST" VIEWS AT THE SAME TIME THAT MASSERA HIMSELF IS TRYING TO APPEAL TO PERONISTS AND LABOR LEADERS IN

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ORDER TO ESTABLISH A POPULIST BASE.

10. ALL THIS LEADS TO A SITUATION IN WHICH THERE ARE NO CLEAR LINES OF AUTHORITY, NO VERY CLEAR POLICY GUIDELINES AND IN WHICH DEBILITATING ANIMOSITIES AMONG THE VARIOUS GOVERNMENT ENTITIES ARE ALL TOO FREQUENT. EACH ZONE COMMANDER AND LOCAL INTERVENTOR, FOR EXAMPLE, IS DOING PRETTY WELL AS HE PLEASES WITH LITTLE OR NO CENTRAL CONTROL. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY (UNDER THE NAVY) AND THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY (UNDER THE ARMY) ARE CARRYING ON A VENDETTA, AS ARE A NUMBER OF OTHER GOVT AGENCIES. IN SHORT, WHILE INSTITUTIONAL DISARRAY HAS BY NO MEANS REACHED INTOLERABLE LEVELS, THE FACT THAT DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ARE NOT BEING CONTROLLED AND RESOLVED IS DAMAGING THE GOVT'S EFFECTIVENESS. WHAT IS NEEDED IS STRONGER LEADERSHIP AT THE TOP.

11. WHAT SEEMED TO SET THIS COUP APART FROM ALL THOSE OF THE PAST WAS THAT ITS LEADERS TOOK POWER WITH AT LEAST THE TACIT APPROVAL OF ALL SECTORS AND IMMEDIATELY ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WERE NOT AGAINST ANYONE; RATHER, THEY WANTED TO PULL THE COUNTRY TOGETHER AGAIN. THERE APPEARED TO BE SOME HOPE EARLY ON THAT THE VIDELA GOVT WOULD TAKE UP WHERE THE HORA DEL PUEBLO LEFT OFF AND FORGE THE KIND OF NATIONAL CONSENSUS WHICH ARGENTINA SO DESPERATELY NEEDS--AND, INDEED, WITHOUT WHICH NO REAL AND LASTING SOLUTIONS ARE POSSIBLE. SINCE THE COUP, HOWEVER, THE HARDLINERS HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY ARE NOT IN THE LEAST INTERESTED IN A CONSENSUS. AND EVEN THE MODERATES LED BY VIDELA HAVE A STRANGE CONCEPT OF CONSENSUS AND WHAT IS NEEDED TO PRODUCE IT. VIDELA HAS SAID THERE CAN BE NO THOUGHT OF RETURN TO POLITICAL ACTIVITY AT LEAST UNTIL TERRORISM HAS BEEN DEFEATED. NEW ATTITUDES ALSO ARE SEEN AS A PREREQUISITE. FIRST, HE SAYS, THE MAJORITY OF ARGENTINES MUST SHARE THE HIGH GOALS OF THE MILITARY. HE HAS VOICED DOUBT, TOO, THAT THE POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH EXISTED BEFORE MARCH 24 WILL BE ONE AND THE SAME AS THOSE WHICH WILL PARTICIPATE IN A FUTURE POLITICAL PROCESS. THERE IS SOME VALIDITY IN ALL THIS. ATTITUDES DOUBTLESS MUST BE CHANGED, AND SOME REALIGNMENT OF PARTIES IS NEEDED--AND IS PROBABLY INEVITABLE. BUT THOSE CHANGES CANNOT SIMPLY BE DICTATED FROM ABOVE BY THE MILITARY. KEY CIVILIAN POLITICAL LEADERS, HOWEVER, SENSE THAT THAT IS

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EXACTLY WHAT VIDELA HAS IN MIND AND THEIR DISPOSITION TO COOPERATE WITH THE GOVT AT ALL IS LESSENER BY THIS FEAR OF BEING LED INTO A TRAP. AT THE MOMENT, IN SUM, THERE IS NO MOVEMENT TOWARD CONSENSUS.

12. IMMEDIATE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE US. HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE AND PERHAPS EVEN INCREASE IN ARGENTINA, THUS PLACING SERIOUS STRAINS ON US-ARGENTINE BILATERAL RELATIONS. THE GOA CANNOT COMPLAIN THAT IT WAS NOT WARNED. THE USG HAS GIVEN THE VIDELA GOVT IMPRESSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS OF SUPPORT, BUT WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY TRIED TO BRING HOME TO THEM (APPARENTLY WITH LITTLE EFFECT) THE NEED TO CONTROL EXCESSES ON THE PART OF THE SECURITY FORCES IF THAT SUPPORT WAS TO CONTINUE.
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